

American College of Physicians

Walter J. McDonald, MD, FACP
Executive Vice President

May 26, 1998

The Honorable Tom Daschle
Minority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510-7020

Dear Senator Daschle:

As Executive Vice President of the American College of Physicians (ACP), the nation's largest medical specialty society with more than 100,000 members who practice internal medicine and its subspecialties, I am writing to commend you for your work on quality assurance legislation. Your bill, S. 1890, the Patients' Bill of Rights Act of 1998, will help improve the quality of care patients receive.

The College has long argued that rather than legislating treatment protocols for individual medical conditions, the best way to ensure quality is to develop a hybrid system of quality assurance and improvement. This system should balance the use of market forces to improve quality with appropriate standards to protect patients. Both of these components are necessary to improve care.

By adopting this approach, your legislation will help improve care and restore trust and confidence in the healthcare system. It will help consumers make more informed choices through the development and collection of performance information and by helping to ensure access to comparable data about competing health plans. It also holds health plans legally responsible when their decisions negatively effect patient care. In addition, the bill provides meaningful patient protections provisions by creating an appeals and grievance process, prohibiting "gag clauses", and shielding physicians who act as advocates for their patients.

The ACP looks forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Walter J. McDonald, MD, FACP

